

Re: Docket number OST-01-9325 - airline bumping policy

I do understand the economic issues involved in overbooking. I also understand that it sometimes results in allowing people to fly who otherwise would not. Neither of those is a persuasive argument for the current support of the practice.

The people who pay the most for their tickets are often traveling on business, and (although they are not ordinarily the ones bumped off) it's possible that when it does happen to them, they lose money—which I understand is unpleasant.

But that experience is not nearly as "victimizing" as the experience of the grandmother who is flying to see a granddaughter in a recital, a family member traveling to a 48-hour family reunion, a mother flying to be with her daughter who is about to have a baby, or any other intensely personal and deeply emotional relational experience which leads a person to buy an airline ticket.

Travel is obviously never a sure thing. Faulty equipment or bad weather can delay travel at any time, and everyone knows that. But if a member of my family buys a ticket for one of the above reasons, or a related one, and they are prevented from attending the event for which they bought the ticket, simply because the airline made a promise to them which it chose not to keep, I would submit that this unethical and unconscionable.

There are obviously times when volunteers gladly delay their arrival time in return for some benefit—a travel voucher or other perquisite. But there are other times when the bumping is forced on members of the public, and it can cause huge pain. If the airline makes a promise to me that it will provide me with transportation somewhere at a given time, I am counting on them to keep their promise to the limit of their ability, not to the limit of their willingness. They certainly demand that I keep my side of the bargain—no excuses. I find it hard to understand why we would allow them to do less on their side of the bargain—unless it's finally true in the U.S.A that the little person simply doesn't matter, only the wealthy corporations. And I pray that our government is unwilling to give up and concede that that is now our official policy. Thank you.

Dr. Ralph W. Milligan